

26. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 25, wherein said fat component account(s) for between 15 to 40% by weight.

27. (Amended) A fat-based heat-meltable confectionery product prepared in accordance with the process of claim 18.

REMARKS

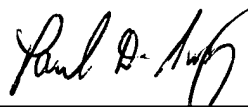
Claims 1-27 are pending in the application. Claims 1-27 have been amended for conformance with U.S. practice. Thus, claims 1-3, 11, 13-16, 18, 20 and 21 have been amended to eliminate reference numerals. Dependent claims 2-17 and 18-27 have been amended to clarify an antecedent issue by changing "method" to ---process---. Claims 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 15, 17, 20, 22, 24 and 27 have been amended to correct multiple dependencies.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the present amendment. The attachment is captioned "Version With Markings To Show Changes Made."

It is submitted that the amendment does not add any new matter and it is respectfully requested that the amendment be entered and that the application receive favorable consideration at an early date.

Respectfully Submitted,

Date: May 21, 2001



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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

Application, Serial No. (Not Yet Assigned)

Attorney Docket No. 360.7416 USU

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows: [-]

1. (Amended) A continuous process for the manufacture of a fat-based heat-meltable confectionery product comprising the steps of:

- (i) introducing a fat-based heat-meltable confectionery mixture into a low-shear extruder mixer [(8)],
- (ii) introducing water into the low-shear extruder mixer [(8)],
- (iii) mixing the fat-based heat-meltable confectionery mixture and water as they pass through the mixer [(8)] to form a fat-based heat-meltable confectionery composition, and
- (iv) forming the fat-based heat-meltable confectionery composition into the fat-based heat-meltable confectionery product.

2. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 1, wherein said low-shear extruder mixer [(8)] is a cavity-transfer type mixer.

3. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 1 [or 2], wherein the water is introduced into the mixer [(8)] in the form of an emulsion with oil.

4. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 3, wherein the emulsion is a water-in-oil emulsion.
5. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 3 [or 4], wherein an emulsifier is included.
6. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in [any preceding] claim 1, wherein sufficient water is added such that the fat-based heat-meltable confectionery product formed in step (iv) has a water content in the range of 1.8 to 3.0% by weight.
7. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 6, wherein the fat-based heat-meltable confectionery product formed in step (iv) has a water content in the range of 1.8 to 2.5% to by weight.
8. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in [any preceding] claim 1, wherein steps (i) and (ii) are effected simultaneously.
9. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in [any preceding] claim 1, wherein the fat-based heat-meltable confectionery mixture is a chocolate mixture.
10. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 9, wherein the chocolate mixture is tempered.
11. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 9 [or 10], wherein the fat-based heat-meltable confectionery mixture is added to the mixer [(8)] at 27 to 45°C.
12. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 11, wherein the mixer is maintained at a temperature of 27 to 45°C.

13. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 10, wherein the tempered chocolate mixture is added to the mixer [(8)] at less than 30°C

14. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 13, wherein the mixer [(8)] is maintained at less than 30°C.

15. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in [any preceding] claim 1, wherein in step (ii), the water is added to the [(8)] mixer at 30 to 45°C.

16. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 15, wherein in step (ii), the water is added to the mixer [(8)] at 40°C.

17. A fat-based heat-meltable confectionery product prepared in accordance with the process [method] of claim 1.

18. A process for the manufacture of a fat-based heat-meltable confectionery product comprising the steps of:

(i) mixing a fat-based heat-meltable confectionery mixture whose fat component remains substantially liquid from its melting temperature to a temperature not exceeding 30°C and water in a mixer [(8)] to produce a fat-based heat-meltable confectionery composition, and

(ii) forming the fat-based heat-meltable confectionery composition into the fat-based heat-meltable confectionery product.

19. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 18, wherein said fat component referred to in step (i) is liquid at less than 20°C.

20. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 18 [or 19], wherein the mixer [(8)] in step (i) is a low-shear extruder mixer.
21. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 20, wherein said mixer [(8)] is a cavity transfer mixer.
22. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in [any one of preceding claims 18 to 21] claim 18, wherein said fat component comprises one or more vegetable oils.
23. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 22, wherein said one or more vegetable oils are selected from the group consisting of sunflower, maize, groundnut, palm, palm kernel and coconut oils.
24. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 22 [or 23], wherein said fat component oil(s) account(s) for at least 5% by weight of the fat-based heat-meltable confectionery mixture.
25. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 24, wherein said fat component account(s) for between 5% and 55% by weight.
26. (Amended) The process [A method] as claimed in claim 25, wherein said fat component account(s) for between 15 to 40% by weight.
27. A fat-based heat-meltable confectionery product prepared in accordance with the process [method] of [any one of claims 18 to 26] claim 18.